

Focusing Questions

Here are some kinds of questions that a cohort participant might use to help focus the attention of the group on aspects of the student work that s/he is most interested in.

Excerpted from **Looking Together at Student Work**. (1999). Blythe, T., Allen, D., & Powell, B. New York: Teachers College Press.

1. About the quality of student work:

- Is the work good enough?
- What is "good enough"?
- In what ways does this work meet or fail to meet a particular set of standards?

2. About teaching practice:

- What do the students' responses indicate about the effectiveness of the prompt or assignment? How might the assignment be improved?
- What kinds of instruction support high quality student performances?

3. About students' understanding:

- What does this work tell us about how well the student understands the topic of the assignment?
- What initial understandings do we see beginning to emerge in this work?

4. About students' growth:

- How does this range of work from a single student demonstrate growth over time?
- How can I support student growth more effectively?

5. About students' intent:

- What issues or questions is this student focused on?
- What aspects of the assignment intrigued this student?
- Into which parts of the assignment did the student put the most effort?
- To what extent is the student challenging herself? In what ways?